



August 28, 2019

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin:

Thank you for your July 23, 2019 letter regarding collective bargaining at the Social Security Administration (SSA). Since my appointment as Commissioner only a short time ago, I have been getting up to speed on key issues. As I said at my confirmation hearing, my top priority is improving public service, especially the disability adjudication process and associated wait times. I appreciate the effort the Administrative Law Judges and hearing offices have made to reduce the hearings backlog. Their hard work directly helps the people who have been waiting far too long for an answer from SSA.

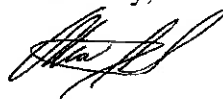
My responsibility as Commissioner is to get public service back on track. I recognize that I cannot do that alone. The path forward is aided if our employees and unions understand and support what we need to accomplish. I have heard from Members of Congress, listened to SSA career leadership, and am visiting offices nationwide to hear directly from the employees serving the public. As part of my process to gather information, I am meeting with American Federation of Government Employees National President David Cox, as well as the leadership of all three unions representing SSA employees. I am open to hearing from all parties who want to work with me to improve service. My time as chairperson at the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board demonstrates my ability to work collaboratively with unions.

Regarding your specific questions, I am respectful of ongoing negotiations and related legal considerations; therefore, I cannot share the strategy of the chief negotiator during active negotiations. While obviously all federal agencies received implementation information about the executive orders and subsequent court action, the White House has not told me or prior career leadership how SSA should negotiate. In the good-faith negotiations you reference, the negotiations need to be between career executives and union officials. I assumed responsibility to run SSA to the best of my ability keeping public service as my number one priority. To that end and with an open mind, I am reviewing a number of agency actions and decisions to chart our course.

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I look forward to working with you to ensure Americans can continue to depend on our service delivery. If you have further questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Eric Skidmore, our Acting Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs, at (202) 358-6030. We are sending similar responses to the cosigners of the letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Saul", written in a cursive style.

Andrew Saul